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Rockcliffe
(J.J. Cruikshank, Jr. Residence)
1000 Bird Street
Hannibal
Marion County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1866

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROCKCLIFFE
(J.J. Cruikshank, Jr. Residence)

HABS No. MO-1866

Location: 1000 Bird Street, Hannibal, Marion County, Missouri

Present Use: Museum

Significance: The house is a significant local example of the Neoclassical Style as built around 1900. Its original owner, J.J. Cruikshank, Jr. played an important part in the local lumber industry. His house served as the setting for much of the upper class social activity in Hannibal at the time.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1901
2. Architect: Firm of Thomas P. Barnett
3. Original owner: J.J. Cruikshank, Jr.
4. Alterations:

1967: Balustrades running around the upper slope of the roof and above cornice on west wing removed. Porch along south front of house removed.

B. Historical Context:

J.J. Cruikshank, Jr. earned the money to build "Rockcliffe" from the lumber industry. Although Missouri itself did not have abundant sources of timber, businesses in Hannibal used their location to advantage by becoming a processing center for logs floated down the Mississippi River. The processed wood was then shipped south and west by railroad.

For the style of Rockcliffe, Cruikshank, Jr. picked the Neoclassical Style then popular in many of the larger cities of the East. Located prominently on a hill overlooking town, the house served as backdrop to many of Hannibal's upper class social events for the first quarter of the twentieth century. At the opening reception in 1901, about 700 guests reportedly attended a lavish ceremony. In 1902, Mark Twain spoke to about 300 guests from the main stairway. Later, each of Cruikshank's three daughters married at the house. After J.J. Cruikshank's death in 1924, the house remained mostly unoccupied during the next forty-three years.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Structure resembles many of the luxurious Neoclassical houses built around 1900. Main facade features a two-story monumental portico with classical columns. A prominent frieze encircles the house. Palladian windows add to the formal feel of the building.
2. Condition of fabric: good

B. Description of Interior:

In all but one main room, the original wallpaper still exists. Hall and reception rooms are panelled in oak; library and dining room, panelled in mahogany. painted canvas covers the ceilings on the main floor, and about fifty percent of the furnishings are original to the house.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: House sits atop a hill overlooking Hannibal and the Mississippi River. Its 1000 Bird Street address refers to the bottom of a steep drive which ascends to the south lawn of the house. Hill Street to the north offers access at grade level.
2. Historic landscape design: O.C. Simonds, "landscape gardener" of Chicago, drew up plans for the grounds. The basic outlines of the plan still survive. A broad walkway leads from the south portico down the hill toward the Bird Street entrance, while the drive from Bird Street divides southeast of the house to form a circle that was originally planted with roses.
3. Outbuildings: A stable originally located near the northeast corner of the property has been demolished.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

National Register of Historic Places nomination form, "Rockcliffe Mansion," compiled by Esley Hamilton, December, 1979.

Telephone conversation with Mr. Archie Hayden, Marion County Historical Society, August 5, 1988.

Prepared by: Robert Buerglener
HABS, August, 1988

ADDENDUM TO
ROCKCLIFFE MANSION
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